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pressed themselves willing to supply a copy of their paper to every member of the Society on the condition of receiving weekly an advertisement of a page. It was merely a question of advertising, and it had not been found to promote the sale of the works to the extent that was anticipated. It had been attended with the expense of £6 a week; which, under the circumstances, the Council did not feel justified in continuing.

The President then resigned the Chair to Dr. CHARNOCK, and read the following paper:—

Observations on the Influence of Peat in Destroying the Human Body, as shown by the discovery of Human Remains buried in Peat in the Zetland Islands.. By Dr. JAMES HUNT. Abstract. [The paper will appear at length in the *Memoirs*.]

During the late explorations in Zetland, undertaken for the Anthropological Society, Dr. Hunt discovered a series of wooden coffins in the neighbourhood of a tumulus, which coffins were buried in the peat. One of these coffins was covered by two stones, which bore certain markings, twelve inches of peat, however, intervening between the coffin and the stone. In the majority of these coffins, all traces of the skeletons buried therein had entirely disappeared; from one, however, was obtained a human finger-nail, and from another a skeleton of large size, the integuments of which were preserved, and the bones impregnated with a black peaty substance. In this coffin was found a liquid having the odour of tannin. Dr. Hunt gave an account of the facts which had been previously published regarding the preservation or destruction of human remains by peat; at the same time that he declined to theorise respecting the conditions which had led to the destruction of many skeletons, and the preservation of the one he then exhibited.

Mr. BOLLAERT mentioned instances in which bodies that had been exposed to the action of a current of water had become dissolved; but at the bottom of the coffins masses of fatty matter were found.

Mr. G. HARRIS made some observations on the best mode of preserving bodies, and the peculiar adaptation of certain kinds of earth for this purpose. He then mentioned the discovery of a number of Roman skeletons some years ago, near the ancient Watling Street road, running between Warwickshire and Leicestershire, which had been buried in gravel, and were in an extraordinary state of preservation. He adverted also to the discovery at Bonn of natural mummies, that had been buried in stone coffins; the flesh, though dried up, still remained on the bones. He alluded as well to the long preservation, in the convent of Mont St. Bernard, of bodies that had been found in the snow, as an instance of the resistance to decay offered by cold; also to the coffins of Charles I. and of John Hampden, on the opening of which the bodies were found remarkably well preserved. Dryness and the total exclusion of the air appeared, in these cases, to have been the main preservative causes.

Mr. TATE observed that there was no question about the great pre-

servative power of ice, for it was evidenced by the preservation of the flesh of extinct mammoths ; but as to peat it was a different matter, and the observations of Dr. Hunt showed that there were conditions in which peat was not preservative. In Ireland there was generally clay underlying the peat, and then brushwood, and on that the remains of the *Cervus megaceros*, the old Irish deer, were found. The bones thus found were imbedded in peat that was saturated with moisture, and with any fluid matter that might be destructive of animal remains. The question seemed to be one for chemists to decide—whether there is any acid in peat that would destroy animal substance? A wet mass of ordinary peat was well known to be preservative. Thus in the Shetland Islands, the body of a person who had been buried in peat for sixty years, had been dug up, and found to be in a good state of preservation ; the peat in that case being very moist. He doubted much whether the coffins in which the human remains were found by Dr. Hunt were of the same date as the bones. Peat-bogs were generally preservative.

MR. C. CARTER BLAKE, in reference to the remarks of Mr. Tate, asked what was the character of the clay deposit above which the bones of the supposed *Cervus megaceros* had been discovered? He believed it did not belong to any definite age, and that it was not a stag. In the case before them, they had a skull and certain long bones of an individual of great size. The skull afforded some peculiarities. It had evidently been for a long time beneath the earth, and bore marks of posthumous compression, which had altered the normal symmetry of the skull. There were also certain conditions observable in the teeth. It evidently belonged to a short-headed race, and was eight-tenths of a hundred in cranial diameter. If the individual could have been proved to be Scandinavian, he should doubt whether they were a long-headed race, for that was a very short skull. He had also seen Northumbrian skulls, which were supposed to be Scandinavian, and were short ; and he was inclined to doubt the popular theory, according to which the Scandinavians were universally a long-headed race. With respect to the geology of the north of Ireland and of the Shetland Islands, there was no resemblance between them ; and they were in want of facts respecting the peculiarities of peat in different localities.

The Rev. DUNBAR HEATH suggested that the remains of clothing found in the coffin should be microscopically examined, and by that means the nationality of the sailors supposed to have been buried might probably be traced. It was well known that the decomposition of human flesh depends on the action of oxygen and the temperature ; but he did not see the anthropological bearing of that part of the paper. It was evident that the individuals had been buried in woollen clothes, and it might be curious to ascertain what was the state of bodies when exposed for a length of time to certain conditions, but the paper conveyed no idea of the period at which they had been buried, nor of their nationality ; and these he considered were the whole points of interest in the subject.

MR. MACKENZIE observed that some evidence as to the age of the

bodies might be obtained from the stitches in the clothes, which were distinctly to be seen. He thought that some fuller description was required of the other coffins, besides the one in which the bones were found. From the circumstance of their being placed irregularly, he considered that the place had not been a regular burying ground.

Mr. NAPIER alluded to the discovery of several skeletons in Shropshire, about thirty years ago, that were buried in peat, and were associated with bronze celts and other bronze implements. The skulls were long, and not those of short-headed individuals. With regard to the length of Scandinavian skulls, he stated that the heads of most of those he had measured were of a medium kind, neither long nor short; the measurements being about seven inches and a half long, and from five inches and seven-eighths to six inches and a quarter wide.

Dr. CAPLIN referred to some instances of the preservation of human bodies in France, especially to that of Henry IV, which was found in a perfect condition when the coffin was opened, sixty years after his death.

Mr. HIGGINS considered the investigation of the influence of peat in preserving or destroying human bodies was decidedly an anthropological question. They had the fact stated of the disappearance of human remains from most of the coffins; and it was important they should investigate the cause of their destruction, as it might throw a light on the evidences of the antiquity of man. From the remains of the clothing, it might be assumed that they belonged to the present century. The disappearance of human remains, he thought, depends much on the motion of water, and that, if the water with which bodies are in contact is stagnant, it will tend to preserve them.

Mr. NAPIER said that his observation of Scandinavian heads was confined to the examination of the heads of Swedish seamen in Bristol, the smallest of which were about seven inches long, and the breadth five inches and six-eighths. He had measured the skulls of twenty Scandinavians, obtained from those portions of that country where the inhabitants were clearly of Scandinavian origin.

Dr. CHARNOCK said that the property of peat to preserve human remains might depend upon the variety of peat in which they were found. He believed that common peat was a composition of the branches, twigs, leaves, roots of trees, etc., and that it might have the property in question from containing tannin. There was, however, another sort of peat, found in Scotland, Germany, and Holland, called "Scottish or German peat", a substance of a yellowish-brown or black colour, which consisted of clay mixed with calcareous earth and pyrites; and it was possible that this variety might not have a preservative property.

Mr. CARTER BLAKE said he should like to know what was the modulus of the transverse breadth of Scandinavian skulls according to Mr. Napier's theory. First he had stated that it was five inches and a half, next six inches and six-eighths, then six inches and one-eighth, and lastly five inches and six-eighths.

Mr. R. TATE. Order!

The PRESIDENT, in reply to the observations on his paper, said his

object had been simply to communicate a fact, the observation of which he believed was unique, that there is a destroying power in some kinds of peat on the human body. In all previous cases, peat had been considered a preservative. In this case, however, there were the remains of a human body found in a coffin among other similar ones which contained nothing, and respecting which the opinion prevailed that they were chests wherein treasure had been buried; and it was not until they had opened several, that they had found a single trace of a human body. As soon, however, as Dr. Hamilton found a finger-nail in one of them, he gave up his theory that the coffins were merely chests. It was a subject of the greatest interest to know where human bodies were to be found. In one case, a man had been buried, but not a trace of a skeleton was to be found; yet an impression of his face remained when all the integuments of the human body were gone. Vegetable substances, which had been buried at the same time, were as fresh as at the present day. All the coffins were found near each other, and within a few inches only of difference in their levels, there are great varieties of peat, varying in quality with the vegetable substances of which they are composed. He hoped that the paper would prove that in some cases, at least, bodies that had been buried perhaps only thirty years had disappeared.

The PRESIDENT then read the following paper, which was a sequel to the foregoing one:—

On the Interpretation of some Inscriptions on Stones recently discovered in the Island of Brassay, Zetland. By Dr. JAMES HUNT. Abstract. [The paper will appear in the *Memoirs*.]

The stones mentioned in the above paper were described by Dr. Hunt. The markings thereon were considered by Dr. Charlton, of Newcastle, to be, one a compound rune, spelling the letters TNYR, the other an Ogham letter B. Principal Barclay, of the University of Glasgow, considered them combined runes, each spelling the word Teit or Tait. Professor Stephens, of Copenhagen, considered them not to be runes, but “runic bo-marks,” monograms, or masons’ marks, one of the characters possibly representing an anchor. Dr. George Moore, of Hastings, considered them monograms formed of Runic characters united, the signification being in each case Danr or Dany. Dr. Pruner-Bey, of Paris, interpreting them as Phœnician, read one of them as *siz* (town) or *sous* (horse). Dr. R. S. Charnock considered one to spell *dud* or *tat*, and the other *dadda* or *tatta*. The specimens will be deposited in the Museum of Scottish Antiquaries.

The thanks of the meeting were voted to the President for his two communications.

Dr. CAPLIN asked what name would be denoted if the inscriptions were reversed?

Dr. CHARNOCK: They would have no meaning at all.

Mr. MACKENZIE adverted to the interpretations by the members of the “Pickwick Club” of the mysterious-looking inscription on a stone submitted to them, and he compared the various interpretations of the meaning of the marks on the stones over the coffins which had